stabbing the family Christmas tree with a butcher knife. 50s Chick said, Too bad it hadn't been decorated yet.

Johnny said she needed a persona for her audition.

She said she had one, HERSELF. But she needed a narrative to go along with it.

Johnny thought she'd come to the wrong guy....

She'd say she was the wife of the man in the picture, but she left him, after he went mad and trashed their Christmas tree.

He hated Christmas! Now she was looking for a job....

*****

Johnny saw him using the pay-phone, frequented by pimps and whores and regularly sabotaged by neighborhood vigilantes. Average height, medium build, well-groomed.

Johnny recognized him, the writer who read Bukowski; he was growing a beard (again)....

Johnny and Romeo chatted outside while the young man browsed through boxes of records that filled the corridor between piles of things.

The young man asked him how his day had been.

Johnny said O.K. How was his?

He said it O.K., but he was late because he'd just talked to his father for the first time in two years. He thought he'd keep in touch; maybe he'd write.

Johnny thought of writing his own family. He wouldn't, because letters had a way of staying around and reappearing later where you least expected them, or wanted....

The man said he meant he would write; he wasn't recommending it to Johnny.

Sorry, Johnny said. Selfish pervert, always thinking of his relations....

*****

They delivered a pine kitchen set to a young woman in a tiny bed-sitter....

Romeo observed how crazy things were. She would never be happier than she was right then, in that tiny apartment with her hundred and fifty dollar table, but they still wanted nine-piece mahogany dining sets, more and more....

Johnny said, that's why he was full of shit. He spent the whole day convincing others to buy it....

Actually, Romeo pointed out, he'd been playing pool with Jack. Shit was Johnny's job....

*****

Someone from the Zombie Crypt Store asked Johnny,

What's new? Johnny glared at him. He should know better. Johnny only sold old shit.

Johnny said he was closing.

The whole Thing Store? Forever? He faked concern.

No. Right now. For now. Johnny grabbed the enormous yellow fanback and headed inside.

Can I help you with that chair?